

# Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

This guidance applies to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschoolers (ages 1-4) in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP. For information on the meal patterns and crediting foods for grades K-12, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages. For information on the meal patterns and crediting foods for preschoolers, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Quantities for the meat/meat alternates component are indicated as ounce equivalents in the NSLP meal pattern for grades K-12; and as ounces in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12, and the NSLP and ASP meal patterns for preschoolers. The amount that credits as 1 ounce equivalent or 1 ounce of meat/meat alternates is the same.



Nuts and seeds and their butters credit as the meat/meat alternates component in the meal patterns for school nutrition programs.

Creditable nuts and seeds in the USDA's meal patterns include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, soy nuts, and sunflower seeds. Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts do not credit.



Roasted or dried soybeans credit the same as soy nuts. However, fresh soybeans (edamame) credit only as the vegetables component (legumes subgroup). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP](#).

## Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

Nuts and seeds served to grades K-12 must meet the requirements below.

- **Breakfast:** The SBP meal pattern for grades K-12 does not require the meat/meat alternates component. School food authorities (SFAs) may substitute 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) for 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component, after offering the minimum daily 1 ounce equivalent of grains. A 1-ounce serving of nuts or seeds offered as a grain substitute credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component. For more information, visit the "[Breakfast Meal Patterns](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

## Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP

- **Lunch:** Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs must combine nuts and seeds with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to meet the full requirement for each grade group. For example, the lunch meal pattern for grades 9-12 requires 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component. A lunch for this grade group cannot contain more than 1 ounce equivalent of nuts or seeds, and must also include 1 ounce equivalent of another food from the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, visit the [“Lunch Meal Patterns”](#) section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- **ASP snack:** SFAs may serve the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) as one of the two required snack components in the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12. Nuts and seeds may credit as the full serving (1 ounce) of the meat/meat alternates component for grades K-12. For more information, refer to the [ASP Meal Pattern for Grades K-12](#).

### Meal Patterns for Preschoolers (Ages 1-4)

Nuts and seeds served to preschoolers must meet the requirements below.

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Nuts, seeds, chunky peanut butter, and chunks or spoonfuls of nut or seed butters are choking hazards. Consider children’s age and developmental readiness when deciding whether to offer these foods in preschool menus. This consideration is also important for children with a disability that requires dietary restrictions.

Preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking include grinding or finely chopping peanuts, nuts, and seeds before adding to prepared foods; and using only creamy nut or seed butters and spreading them thinly on other foods such as toast and crackers. For additional guidance, visit the [“Choking Prevention”](#) section of the CSDE’s [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

- **Breakfast:** The SBP meal pattern for preschoolers does not require the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs may substitute foods from the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) for the entire grains component up to three times per week. A ½-ounce serving of nuts or seeds offered as a grain substitute credits as ½ serving of the grains component, which is the minimum serving size for ages 1-4. For more information, refer to the [SBP Preschool Breakfast Meal Pattern](#) and visit the USDA’s webpage, [Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast](#).

## Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP

- **Lunch:** Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs must combine nuts and seeds with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to meet the full requirement for each age group. For example, the lunch meal pattern for ages 3-4 requires 1½ ounces of the meat/meat alternates component. A lunch for this age group cannot contain more than ¾ ounce of nuts or seeds, and must also include ¾ ounce equivalent of another food from the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to the [NSLP Preschool Lunch Meal Pattern](#).
- **ASP snack:** SFAs may serve the meat/meat alternates component (including nuts and seeds) as one of the two required snack components in the ASP meal pattern for preschoolers. Nuts and seeds may credit as the full serving (½ ounce) of the meat/meat alternates component for ages 1-4. For more information, refer to the [ASP Preschool Meal Pattern](#).

### Crediting Nut and Seed Butters

Creditable nut and seed butters include almond butter, cashew nut butter, peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, and sunflower seed butter. Reduced-fat peanut butter credits if it meets the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) standard of identity for peanut butter ([21 CFR 164.150](#)), which requires that products contain at least 90 percent peanuts.

The serving size for nut and seed butters is based on volume (tablespoons). Two tablespoons of a nut or seed butter credits as 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component for grades K-12 in the NSLP; and 1 ounce of the meat/meat alternates component for grades K-12 in the ASP and preschoolers in the NSLP. Table 1 indicates the meat/meat alternates contribution of different serving sizes of nut and seed butters.

#### Considerations for serving size

Menu planners should consider the appropriateness of the required serving for each grade group. It may be unreasonable to provide the full serving of a nut or seed butter in one menu item, such as a peanut butter sandwich. The CSDE recommends providing a smaller portion of peanut butter and supplementing with another food from the meat/meat alternates component to provide the full serving.

For example, the lunch meal pattern for grades 9-12 requires 4 tablespoons (¼ cup) of peanut butter to credit as 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component. This is a large amount for two slices of bread. A lunch menu could provide 2 ounce equivalents of meat/meat alternates from a sandwich containing 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 ounce of meat/meat alternates) served with ½ cup of yogurt (1 ounce of meat/meat alternates). Another option is providing the required 4 tablespoons of peanut butter in three half-sandwiches that each contain 4 teaspoons of peanut butter.

## Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP

**Table 1. Serving size for nut and seed butters**

<b>Meal pattern serving of meat/meat alternates</b>	<b>Tablespoons <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Scoop (disher) size <sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Weight equivalent <sup>3</sup></b>
1/4 ounce equivalent (minimum creditable amount)	1/2	Closest is No. 100 (2 teaspoons)	0.275 ounces
1/2 ounce equivalent	1	Closest is No. 60 (3 1/4 teaspoons)	0.55 ounces
3/4 ounce equivalent	1 1/2	Closest is No. 40 (1 2/3 tablespoons)	0.825 ounces
<b>1 ounce equivalent</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>No. 30 (2 tablespoons)</b>	<b>1.1 ounces</b>
1 1/2 ounce equivalents	3	Closest is No. 20 (3 1/3 tablespoons)	1.65 ounces
2 ounce equivalents	4	No. 16 (1/4 cup)	1.2 ounces
<sup>1</sup> One tablespoon equals 3 teaspoons. <sup>2</sup> Scoop equivalents are from the Institute of Child Nutrition's <i>Basics at a Glance Portion Control Poster</i> . <sup>3</sup> Weight equivalents are from the USDA's <i>Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs</i> .			



# Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP

## Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/AcceptDocumentationSNP.pdf>

Afterschool Snack Program Handbook (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/ASP/ASPHandbook.pdf>

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CNlabel.pdf>

Choking Prevention (CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ChokingPrevention>

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditCommercialMMASNP.pdf>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#MMA>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12 in the ASP (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Afterschool-Snack-Program/Documents#MMAK12>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Preschoolers (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Related-Resources#MMA>

Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/MPGpreschool.pdf>

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Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products in Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

[https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS\\_Meats-Meat\\_Alternates\\_Fillable\\_508.pdf](https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource-files/PFS_Meats-Meat_Alternates_Fillable_508.pdf)

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/PFS.pdf>

Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Preschool/ResourcesPreschoolMealPattern.pdf>

Reviewer's Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements for Meat/Meat Alternates (USDA):

[https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer\\_checklist.pdf](https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/reviewer_checklist.pdf)

Serving Meat and Meat Alternates at Breakfast – Handouts, training slides, and webinars in English and Spanish (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-meats-and-meat-alternates-breakfast>

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturePFStipsheet.pdf>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#), [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#), and [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/CreditNuts.pdf>.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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